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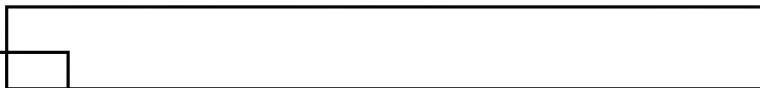
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*ISRAEL-SYRIA:

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The Israeli press quotes official sources as saying that the Syrians are building up their forces along the front and are evacuating civilians from the area. The press adds that a large number of Syrian tanks are now at the front and that long-range artillery has been moved into forward positions.

Press reports from Damascus quote the Syrian defense minister as saying that "Syria is now much stronger than it was before the October war" and that it "is prepared to launch an all-out war against Israel to ensure the liberation of all occupied territories."

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Amman had closed roads in northern Jordan to civilian traffic and was planning to send an unspecified number of troops into Syria, perhaps as soon as today. The reports have subsequently been denied by Jordan's chief of staff, who told US officials that the main road from Amman to Damascus is completely open. He also maintained that there were no plans for a Jordanian force to proceed to Syria. Indeed, it is unlikely that King Husayn would send Jordanian forces into such a potentially explosive situation. Husayn is now in Egypt, and neither Crown Prince Hassan nor army Chief of Staff Bin Shakir is likely to act on his own and send troops into Syria.

(continued)

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] According to Jerusalem Radio, Prime Minister Meir called an urgent meeting of the cabinet yesterday at which the defense minister, the acting chief of staff, and the chief of military intelligence are said to have "reviewed security affairs."

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[REDACTED]

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*Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

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*ISRAEL: Defense Minister Dayan's political opponents have seized on the Agranat Commission's partial report to boost their efforts to force him to resign.

The commission's report blamed the military leadership and absolved Dayan of direct responsibility for the shortcomings uncovered in Israel's performance just before and during the initial stages of the war last October. Dayan's critics, however, have charged that as defense minister he must accept the political consequences of those failures and resign.

Despite renewed calls by members of Prime Minister Meir's Labor Alignment, reportedly including even some other cabinet ministers, for him to step down, Dayan has said he will not do so. His supporters in the government coalition argue that if the principle of ministerial accountability is to be applied, then the entire cabinet shares responsibility and must resign if he is forced out.

The US Embassy in Tel Aviv believes that the next few days will be decisive in determining whether or not the government can weather the storm. Mrs. Meir, who wants to keep Dayan in the cabinet, will do all she can to patch over the differences within the Alignment, one of whose factions he heads, before the Knesset debate next week on the Agranat report.

The stakes are high. Dayan's forced departure could cause the government coalition to break up; this in turn would probably lead to new elections. His critics within the Alignment are probably not yet prepared to go this far. The tense and uncertain military situation on the Syrian front may also help make Dayan's opponents reluctant to force the issue at this time. [REDACTED]

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SAUDI ARABIA: Saudi Oil Minister Yamani asked the US ambassador on Thursday whether the US was getting all the oil it needed. He said more could be sent from Saudi Arabia if it were needed and added that tankers that had left Saudi Arabia for other destinations before the embargo was lifted could be diverted to the US.

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Assuming continued progress toward a Middle East settlement, King Faysal's strong desire to bring oil prices down will be the key factor in determining Saudi Arabia's oil production policy this year and next. Faysal believes that prices have risen inordinately as a result of shortages created by Arab policy. He is particularly unhappy with other producers, especially Iran, which he believes are exploiting the opportunity created by the oil embargoes and cutbacks to enrich themselves.

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In spite of their stand on production, the Saudis have not foreclosed the oil weapon option. This was clear in Yamani's statement last week that the amount of oil Saudi Arabia exports to the US is tied to progress toward a Middle East settlement. Such remarks are intended both to prod the US to lean on the Israelis and to deflect criticism from the hard-line Arabs.

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CHINA-USSR: Peking is still handling the Soviet helicopter incident with restraint.

Propaganda has been sparse and low-key. The Chinese have not launched the kind of intensive propaganda exploitation of the downed helicopter that followed the expulsion in January of five Soviet diplomats accused of spying. Furthermore, there has been no marked change in the tone or volume of the anti-Soviet polemic of the past several months.

The Chinese have held several local rallies in Sinkiang Province where the helicopter landed. Accounts of the rallies have not been carried by the national press, however, and demonstrations have been confined to western China.

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Peking clearly is avoiding an excessively provocative stance in handling the crew. There is no known precedent for Chinese detention of Soviet military personnel captured inside China, and Peking is mindful of the possibility of Soviet retaliation. Reports about Chinese plans to put the crew on trial and the planned duration of the crew's detention are conflicting.

The fact that anti-Soviet sentiment has become enmeshed in Chinese domestic affairs plainly has complicated Peking's course. The rallies in Sinkiang explicitly linked the helicopter incident to China's current campaign against Lin Piao and Confucius. China, moreover, has associated the helicopter affair with the spying incident in January so as to depict a pattern of Soviet pressure on China.

These domestic implications may be partly responsible for Peking's apparent indecision regarding the helicopter incident. In a time of political uncertainty, no one may be willing to take responsibility for early disposition of the Soviet crew.

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